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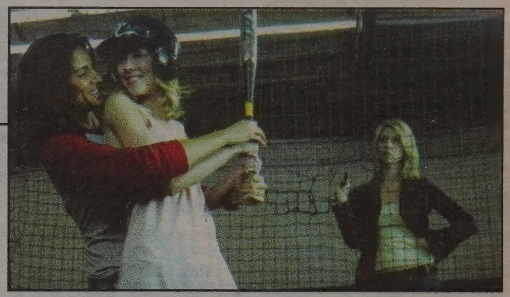
Visually Aesthetic Vacancies
Three vacant downtown

Film

Purple reign

The Lavender Film Festival is back — and with some encouraging efforts in tow

By Pete Freedman



If you like your **Will & Grace** *less funny and more gay-panic-filled, you'll love* **Out at the Wedding!**

GLBT film has come a long way since 2005's *Brokeback Mountain*.

Actually, wait. Has it?

What have we, the moviegoers, seen in its wake? Has there been *anything* semi-insightful since Ang Lee's masterpiece? What does the current success of the Adam Sandler- and Kevin James-driven *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* mean? That audiences are warming to the idea of gay characters in mainstream movies — but only if the characters are gay by ruse?

Why aren't more GLBT films of *merit* making it into the mainstream? Where *are* they?

We kept these questions in mind as we screened three new GLBT films — each scheduled to be shown at this weekend's eighth annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival.

CAPSULE

Eighth annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival

The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 30 W. Dale St.

Friday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m.; Saturday, Sept. 15, 12:30 p.m.; Sunday, Sept. 16, noon

Tickets: $75 for a full festival pass, $35 for a Saturday or Sunday pass, $25 for a Friday night pass, $10 for individual show passes; call the Fine Arts Center box office at 634-5583 or visit pplff.org for more info.

What: ***Out at the Wedding***
When: Friday, Sept. 14, 8 p.m.
Premise: Not wanting to upstage her sister's wedding, Alex avoids telling her family about her new, black, Jewish fiancé. Meanwhile, at the reception, Alex's friend Jonathan accidentally implies that she is gay.
Verdict: Though there are *some* kinda-funny moments — in the when-will-the-awkwardness-end sort of way — *Out at the Wedding* largely fails. This film's almost *Chuck and Larry*-like in its affinity for gay-panic humor. Worse, as if the whole thing didn't already sound like a drawn-out *Will & Grace* episode, it's clear that Andrea Marcellus, who plays Alex, is trying to channel Debra Messing here. Yeesh.

What: ***Itty Bitty Titty Committee***
When: Saturday, Sept. 15, 12:30 p.m.
Premise: After breaking up with her girlfriend, not getting into college and finding herself at work in a plastic surgeon's office, Anna meets a radical activist named Sadie, who helps open her eyes to the world.
Verdict: Director Jamie Babbit and a handful of promising young actors deserve some credit for this one. It's a sweet-looking flick, and Babbit's direction nicely complements the whole punk-rock, change-the-world-by-undermining-it mentality of the film.

Itty Bitty Titty Committee isn't so much a film about GLBT lifestyles so much as it's a film about a resurgence in feminism — that happens to be fronted by a number of women, young and old, radical and conservative, who happen to be gay. Be warned: The language is coarse, the sexuality is high and the idealistic payoff at the end doesn't match the pessimism of the build-up. But it's a pretty fun ride.

What: ***Red Without Blue***
When: Sunday, Sept. 16, noon
Premise: A documentary recapping the lives of Mark and Alex, Missoula-born twins who, together, faced coming out, pretty rampant drug use and a joint suicide attempt.
Verdict: This is the most fascinating of the three movies we screened. It'd be difficult to not be moved by Mark and Alex's attempts to find their place in the world. We watch sympathetically as Mark deals with having his first real boyfriend and as Alex, who now identifies himself as Clair, considers undergoing a sex-change operation.

The only problem here: Too much of this documentary is spent with the subjects staring into the camera, telling the sometimes-shocking tales that affected them as teenagers. It would've been nice to have seen the twins deal with these issues as they age, and over a longer period of time. But that's a minor flaw.

— *pete@csindy.com*

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Visually Aesthetic Vacancies

Three vacant downtown storefronts (110 N. Tejon, 210 N. Tejon and 327 N. Tejon) have been filled with art! VAV - Visually Aesthetic Vacancies kicks off September 7th, 2007! The Smokebrush Gallery's very own Kat & Bob Tudor have graciously decorated these three windows as part of our "pilot" program. Their brite, colorful and imaginative pieces are designed to get people's attention and start this process with a bang! The Downtown Partnership and volunteers will then work to fill each and every vacant storefront window possible on an ongoing basis as vacancies allow. The intent? To beautify our Downtown streetscape, and promote artistic venues. For more information go to downtown80903.com .

"For the Downtown Partnership, this is Laszlo Palos".

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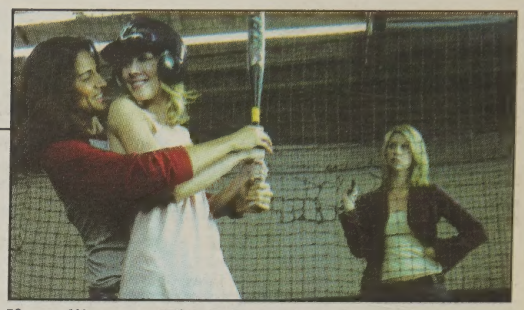

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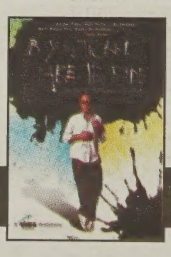

Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride (NR)
Starz Home Entertainment

One of the most misunderstood anti-heroes of all time is Hunter S. Thompson, and this documentary does its best to go behind the Gonzo façade and tell the inner story of the man. As wild and crazy as his Raoul Duke persona was known, it comes as a great surprise how normal the journalist-author was, even though he was besieged by a constant longing for purpose and a constant need to put on what might best be called The Hunter Show. Originally broadcast on the Starz network, this documentary mainly focuses on his film works and what of his life was captured on film. No special features, which is actually a shame — elongated, uninterrupted interviews actually would have been nice — but as far puff-docs go, you could do worse. Fans will love it. ***— Louis Fowler***

Welcome to the Grindhouse: The Bodyguard / Sister Street Fighter (R)
Deimos Entertainment

Sonny Chiba is back in a double-feature from Deimos' rousing *Welcome to the Grindhouse* series, focusing on the best B-cinema that the '70s had to offer. This time Deimos takes the gritty kung-fu approach, starting with Chiba in *The Bodyguard*. He plays himself, out to take down the mob and its drug trade, and he's doing it with two fists and a flying foot to the face. He passes the reins to Sue Shiomi in *Sister Street Fighter*, the proto-feminist martial-arts classic that has her taking on the mob when they kidnap her secret-agent brother. Both are thrilling, and as with all these *Grindhouse* discs, they recreate the experience with classic trailers and theater announcements, minus the sticky floors and threat of bodily harm. ***— Louis Fowler***

Heaven & Hell: Live From Radio City Music Hall (NR)
Rhino Entertainment

You can keep your Ozzy-era Black Sabbath. I find it a tad overrated. I'll take *Mob Rules*-era Sabbath, where Ronnie James Dio took over vocal duties, rocking twice as hard as ever. He lasted only a couple albums, but after a successful Ozzy reunion, the members of Black Sabbath — now renamed Heaven & Hell — took to the stage with Dio once again, to massive acclaim. This reunion was captured in the fist-pumping DVD of their Radio City Music Hall concert, with 15 hard-rocking cuts showing the band in top form, and including the songs "The Sign of the Southern Cross" and "Computer God." In addition to the concert, there are behind-the-scenes tour documentaries galore, so it'll feed the fix. ***— Louis Fowler***

A weekend of art on screen

The 8th Annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival

By Barbie Obregon

Want to get higher? Higher in elevation, that is. Then drive to Colorado Springs on the weekend of September 14-16 for the 8th Annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival (PPLFF) to elevate your body, mind, and GLBT spirit. Yes, I said GLBT spirit. When you sit on that cozy theater seat in the Fine Arts Center and share laughter, tears, outrage and elbow rests with fellow community members, you will find yourself feeling more enthusiastic and empowered. A combination of ghosts, dance competitions, spray-painting lesbians, underground gay raves and family drama will entertain, inspire and provoke you.

Our outstanding lineup of films for this year's festival includes the winner of the OutFest Outstanding Dramatic Feature Award, the winner of the NewFest (New York City Lesbian and Gay Film Festival) Audience Award and winners at San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival. In addition to being a cultural event that showcases the GLBT community's artistic triumphs in film, the PPLFF represents a social activity as well. Purchase a Full Festival Pass to gain entrance to all nine features and nine shorts, our opening night catered reception, fabulous parties and discussions.

We want you to enjoy the entire festival just as much as we enjoy planning it. As always, we are offering the Full Festival Pass for only $60 via mail. Ultimately, our goal is to expand the PPLFF into the thriving hub of Denver. While we envision building this second home for our film festival in the very near future, we would like to open our doors to the GLBT community and its supporters who live outside of Colorado Springs. So buy your festival pass and check out an inexpensive and fabulous weekend.

On Friday evening, September 14, at 6 p.m., our catered reception will

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75 CLASSES
THIS FALL & WINTER!

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with Trine Bumiller

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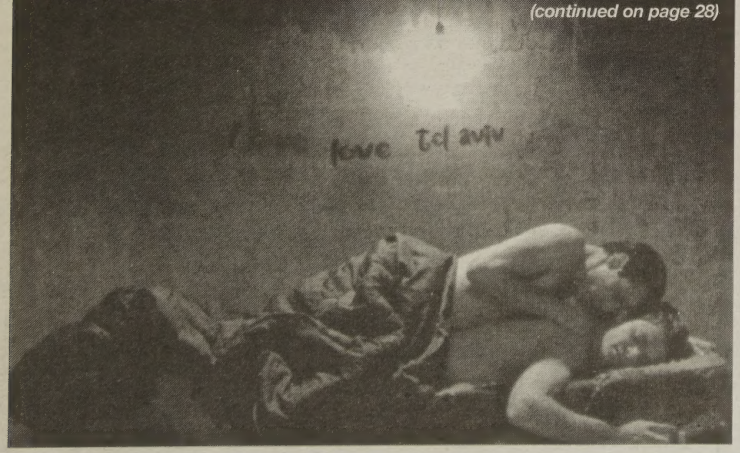
On Friday evening, September 14, at 6 p.m., our catered reception will provide the perfect opportunity to mingle with other attendees and engage in lively conversation. Meet new or old members of the community, make a festival buddy, or just feel free to enjoy the delicious food. However, do not overstuff yourself into an uncomfortable situation with your attire, for our opening night film is guaranteed to keep you laughing.

Take your seat by 7:30 p.m. and be prepared to explore the politics of full disclosure in an environment with more twists and intimidation than that at the national level: a family wedding in good old South Carolina. *Out at the Wedding* takes a hilarious closer look at the closet. However, this woman's closet is spacious enough to hide a make-believe lesbian lover, a Jewish African-American fiancé and a conservative family thought to be dead. Director Lee Friedlander proves that although our houses may vary, we all have a closet. An award-winning director whose credits include *Girl Play*, Friedlander will attend this year's festival, offering the rare privilege of meeting such a talented artist. You are sure to have plenty to talk about, so join us at the Underground for the after party.

(continued on page 28)



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